

# Fringe players have chance to impress

## EP Kings tackle Western Province in new rugby contest

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**S**EVERAL players on the fringes of the Southern Kings Super Rugby squad will have a chance to impress when the EP Kings face Western Province in the new SuperSport Rugby Challenge.

Sunday's match at the Wolfson Stadium (kick-off 3pm) is part of a triple header which also features matches between African Bombers and PE Harlequins (10.30am) and the Border Bulldogs against Boland (1pm).

The Kings team will be led by towering lock Giant Mtyanda who will be determined to stamp his authority against a combative Western Province outfit.

Namibian test star Chrysander Botha will start at fullback for the Kings and will also have a point to prove.

Botha played in the Kings' opening Super Rugby match against the Jaguares, but has since fallen down the pecking order.

Talented Garrick Mattheus will be pulling the strings for the Kings at flyhalf.

There will be plenty of firepower in the EP pack with lock Stefan Willemse and loose forward Thembelani Bholi aiming to drive the Kings forward.

Out wide, the Kings will have the pace of the experienced Alshaun Bock on the wing who will prove a handful for the Western Province defence.

Earlier in the season, the Kings scored a narrow 22-21 win over the Bulldogs in a friendly in Port Elizabeth.

It looked as though the Bulldogs had won the clash at the death with a late try, but a long-range penalty by Mattheus clinched a hard-earned win for the Kings.

The new tournament will burst into life this weekend with six fixtures in the SuperSport Rugby Challenge being played across the country.

The recently launched competition will see all 14 provinces and a team from Namibia battle it out in three regional pools, with the top eight sides continuing to contest for the trophy in a number of knockout matches later in the tournament.

Before the EP match, club sides African Bombers and PE Harlequins will contest for bragging rights and valuable league points in the Eastern Province Grand Challenge competition, with the winner playing in the Gold Cup later this year.

The provincial action opens up with a couple of mouth-watering clashes on Saturday.

In Pretoria, the Blue Bulls will host the Pumas at Loftus Versfeld in the first match of the tournament.

The home team will be coached by the experienced Pote Human, fresh from leading Tuks to the title in the Varsity Cup on Monday night,

while the visitors will have new coach Brent Janse van Rensburg in charge for the first time.

In Kempton Park, the Falcons welcome the Namibian Welwitschias and in Welkom, the Griffons host the Leopards.

The Namibians will be keen to start well and have an astute coach in Welshman, Lyn Jones, but the Falcons will have some World Cup experience in their coaching booth with Rudy Joubert and will be prepared.

Border coach David Dobela's attacking philosophy is well-known and if his team play according to plan, will test the defensive structures of Boland to the fullest.

The visitors have a new coach in Randall Modiba and his side's mental preparation will be a huge factor in this match.

The Sharks XV boast an explosive backline in Durban, with the likes of Odwa Ndungane, S'bu Nkosi packing incredible firepower for their game against Griquas.

The vastly experienced Sharks coaching staff of Paul Anthony and Ricardo Loubscher

will also make sure the Durbanites play to their strength.

The EP Kings team: Chrysander Botha, Alshaun Bock, Siyanda Grey, Neil Maritz, Jize Molapo, Garrick Mattheus, Stefan Ungerer, Lusanda Badyana, Thembelani Bholi, Brandon Brown, Giant Mtyanda (capt), Stefan Willemse, Johan van Wyk, Tongo Balekile, Dewald Barnard. Replacements: JP Jamieson, Roche van Zyl, Sintu Manjezi, Christiaan de Bruin, Roche Nel, Simon Bolze, Keanu Vers.

**TOWERING TALENT:**  
Imposing lock Giant Mtyanda will lead the EP Kings into battle against Western Province at the Wolfson Stadium on Sunday  
Picture: RICHARD HUGGARD

